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Assignment 4\_1 Young Adult Literature

LSC 5505 Core Resources

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<b>Characteristics of Young Adult Literature</b>	<u>The Golden Compass</u> By Philip Pullman	<u>The Bell Jar</u> by Sylvia Plath
<b>Involves a teenage protagonist and often reflects and interprets their views.</b>	Lyra Belacqua, the protagonist in this story, is accompanied by Pantalaimon, her personal daemon (a pet-like creature who changes shape) who never leaves her side. When she is still a child, a seaman on the ship tells Lyra, “There’ll come a time when...you’ll want to grow up like all the other girls”(Pullman 167)	The protagonist in this story is a college student who has joined the editorial staff of a New York magazine. Though she is officially out of her teens, she is still dealing with her relationship with her mother and struggles with issues of sexuality. She scorns many of the adults in her life, including college professors.
<b>Is fast-paced. Generally, its dialogue is direct and confrontational, and the language is sparse</b>	“The Golden Compass” is an account of Lyra’s adventures at Jordon College in Oxford, in London with her “adopted” mother, at sea, and on sleds on a clandestine trip heading towards the North Pole. On this journey, she rides in a giant balloon, confronts a Great Bear King, flies through the air with a swarm of witches on pine branches, and fights warriors intent on killing	Most of this novel follows the daily life of Esther and is an account of her inner monologue of angst and pessimism, not unlike J.D. Salinger’s <i>The Catcher in the Rye</i> . Esther has a cynical view of the world which aligns with themes of teenage angst. Dialogue is sparse, but I wouldn’t call the novel “fast-paced”. This is a novel written for an adult audience, but adopted by young adults as one to

	her. The pace of this novel is fast, moving from place to place as Lyra journeys north.	which they can relate.
<b>Includes a variety of genres, themes and subjects</b>	The themes of “self-identity”, courage, and a resistance to change are exemplified in this novel. Lyra is changing, and whereas she and her childhood mate Roger used to often swim naked together, she now chooses to sit outside the bathroom while he bathes (Pullman 365) These two children are growing up.	<i>The Bell Jar</i> is about Ester’s struggle to find her place in the world and to find ways to overcome her depression. She seeks to find meaning in her life and is unsuccessful. For example, she writes, “After nineteen years of running after good marks and prizes and grants... I was dropping clean out of the race.”
<b>Is basically optimistic, or at least hopeful</b>	Lyra is fearless and optimistic because she envisions the world as she wants it. An imaginative person would create all sorts of scenarios for failure, but not Lyra. For her, she sees what she hopes to happen, and eventually, she does fulfill her dream of finding Aurora Lights, reaching her imprisoned father, and freeing the children who were about to have their daemons severed from them.	This book is about the hopeless life that Esther is leading, her inner conflicts, and search for meaning and happiness. This is not a hopeful novel. It has settings such as insane asylums and she experiences shock treatment. I doubt I would suggest it to a student who is struggling from depression until after they were feeling stronger.
<b>Does not always provide the answers, but rather portrays a young person in search of them</b>	Throughout this novel, Lyra is searching for the meaning of “Dust”, a topic with which the adults around her are fascinated. Lyra is curious about the cold in the North Country, the armored bears, and why the Tartars have holes cut into the top of their skulls. These answers aren’t thoroughly answered, and the book ends with a suggestion that	Esther doesn’t feel as if she fits in.

	the story will continue in the next book of the trilogy.	
<b>Can be coming-of-age, “problem” novels that focus on the challenges of youth and tell of a young person’s first experiences, be it love, death or adult choices and responsibilities.</b>	This novel is a coming of age novel when young Lyra must come to terms with her heritage and overcome her fears. She faces death when she challenges the Gobblers and those who sever children from their daemons. She is bequeathed the “althiometer”, a compass she must protect and keep with her at all times. In trying to convince Lyra that her experiments are valid, Mrs. Coulter (her “adopted” mother) tells her, “[Y]ou’re young, but at the age we call puberty, the age you’re coming to very soon, ... which bring[s] all sorts of troublesome thoughts and feelings” (Pullman 83).	It discusses sexuality, relationships with both men and women, and depression.

### **Differences between Juvenile Literature and Young Adult Literature**

Juvenile literature teaches children about the world while young adult literature depicts the conflicts and struggles of “coming of age” in an adult world. While juvenile literature can, at times, be didactic in nature, young adult literature tends to show protagonists in situations where they must make difficult choices without the help of adults. Topics of juvenile literature might include “trying on Dad’s shoes” (*Shoes! Shoes! Shoes!*), losing one’s way home (*Savi*), and adjusting to a new pet or person in the house (*Making Room*), young adult literature deals with themes that require a more mature view on life. In *The Golden Compass*, Lyra must take control of her own destiny, without parental supervision. In fact, she must act in opposition to the wishes of her parents in order to remain true to herself. In *The Bell Jar*, Esther faces the realities of her relationship with her mother, and must try to come to terms with the fact that her mother is partially responsible for her own mental illness. Protagonists in young adult literature must

separate themselves from parental guidance and make their own way in the world. In *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*, for example, Kit must face the challenges of entering an unfamiliar society, namely Puritan New England, parentless and without adult assistance. Having just arrived off the ship from Barbados where she was raised by her liberal uncle, she must learn how to adjust to life in a religious society with unwritten social codes of behavior. A strong, female personality isn't congruent with the male-dominated social structure and she doesn't fit in with her aunt's family, so she seeks the maternal, unconditional love of Hannah who lives alone on the meadows. Like Kit in *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*, Jim Hawkins in *Treasure Island* must make his way in the world without the help or guidance of parents. After being pulled into the drama of sailing the high seas in search of a hidden treasure, he shares a ship with dangerous pirates, single-handedly captures a ship, and faces certain death at the hands of mutineers. These coming-of-age tales show how the events and challenges of youth lead young protagonists into adulthood. Both of these books end with an optimistic future for the protagonists: Jim Hawkins and his gang have found the treasure, and head back with a fortune of gold while Kit in *The Witch of Blackbird Pond* finally chooses the right man: the one who readers hoped, all along, that she would marry.

### **Differences between Young Adult Literature and Adult Literature**

Adult fiction differs from Young Adult fiction in that the protagonists have often already separated from their family of origin and have set off on their own. In *Wicked: the Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West* by Gregory Macquire, we follow life of Elphaba from birth all the way through her adult life. Like Lyra in *The Golden Compass*, Elphaba must come to terms with her royal heritage. However, the themes in *Wicked* deal with adult issues, unlike those in *The Golden Compass*. Politics, perversion, and a generally pessimistic outlook on life can be found in adult fiction. Some scenes in *Wicked*, for example, are obscene such as a theater show depicting mechanical dolls and humans have orgies that are witnessed by crowds of gawking villagers or politics causing a dark cloud of evil and fear to hover over the land. Other differences between adult and young adult literature can be found in the language. Adult literature has language which

can be more complex and often the writing requires abstract, rather than concrete, thinking. Themes such as a search for meaning in the universe can be found in novels such as *The Life of Pi* by Yann Martel. Topics that are addressed in *The Life of Pi* are the role of religion in human relationships, the transitory nature of belief, and metaphysics. Even though the protagonist in *The Life of Pi* is young and is setting upon a sea journey not unlike the protagonists in *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*, *The Golden Compass*, and *Treasure Island*, the novel is written for an adult audience. It is difficult to find exact differences between adult and young adult literature, because often adults read young adult literature such as Rowling's Harry Potter series. Perhaps the best way to differentiate between young adult literature and adult literature is the intent of the author. Nowadays, young adult literature is a genre of its own, which is a new phenomenon. Whereas the classic *Treasure Island* was written for adults but adopted by young adults as a favorite book, contemporary young adult literature is written with a teen audience in mind.